NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-0729 MAY 6, 1976
SEAN KELLY/PENTAGON

FORD RAISES PENTAGON BUDGET

ANNCR:

TWICE, IN RECENT DAYS, PRESIDENT FORD HAS ASKED CONGRESS TO INCREASE HIS ORIGINAL BUDGET FOR MILITARY SPENDING. IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM THE PENTAGON, SEAN KELLY EXPLAINS WHY:

VOICE:

THE TWO REQUESTS WERE FORESEEN LAST JANUARY, BUT THEY WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT BUDGET THEN SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS. AT THAT TIME, PRESIDENT FORD SAID THAT A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT DECISIONS REGARDING STRATEGIC NUCLEAR PROGRAMS MIGHT HAVE TO BE REVIEWED -- DEPENDING ON THE PROGRESS OF THE STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TALKS. HE ALSO TOLD CONGRESS THEN THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION WAS CONDUCTING A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF NAVAL SHIP-BUILDING REQUIREMENTS, AND THAT HE MIGHT HAVE TO ASK FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS -- DEPENDING ON THAT STUDY'S RECOMMENDATIONS.

THE TIMING IS CONSIDERED TO BE IMPORTANT, AND PENTAGON OFFICIALS USE IT IN AN EFFORT TO REFUTE CHARGES THAT THE PRESIDENT'S REQUESTS ARE POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED -- RONALD REAGAN, MISTER FORD'S OPPONENT FOR THE REPUBLICAN PARTY PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, HAS CRITICISED THE FORD ADMINISTRATION'S DEFENSE POLICIES, SAYING THEY HAVE PLACED THE UNITED STATES IN A POSITION MILITARILY INFERIOR TO THAT OF THE SOVIET UNION.

IN ANY EVENT, THE SHIP-BUILDING STUDY IS NOT COMPLETED, BUT THE NAVY WANTS TO GET STARTED ON SOME OF THE CONSTRUCTION RIGHT AWAY. IT SEES WHAT IT REGARDS AS DEFICIENCIES IN ITS PRESENT FLEET, AND IT WANTS TO CORRECT THESE BEFORE WAITING

ANY LONGER. FOR THAT REASON, PRESIDENT FORD IS NOW ASKING CONGRESS FOR MORE THAN A THOUSAND MILLION DOLLARS IN ADDITIONAL SHIP-BUILDING FUNDS. THESE WOULD BE SPENT ON THE PURCHASE OF FIVE NEW SHIPS: FOUR GUIDED-MISSILE FRIGATES AND A TANKER. SOME OF THE MONEY WOULD ALSO BE USED TO BEGIN CONSTRUCTION OF A FIFTH NUCLEAR-POWERED AIRCRAFT CARRIER. ALSO, TWO HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS OF THE REQUEST WOULD BE SPENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AIRCRAFT CAPABLE OF TAKING OFF VERTICALLY FROM A SHIP'S DECK.

IN EXPLAINING THE DETAILS OF THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST, ADMIRAL JAMES HOLLOWAY -- CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS -- SAID THAT THEY WERE ALL RELATED TO THE FUTURE OF AVIATION AT SEA. FOR INSTANCE, HE NOTED THAT THE GUIDED-MISSILE FRIGATES WOULD INCREASE THE NAVY'S ABILITY TO COUNTER A NEW THREAT POSED BY THE RECENTLY-DEPLAYED SOVIET LONG-RANGE SUPERSONIC BOMBER, KNOWN HERE AS THE BACKFIRE. ADMIRAL HOLLOWAY SAID THAT INCREASING NUMBERS OF THESE AIRCRAFT WERE NOW BEING INTRODUCED INTO SOVIET NAVAL AVIATION. ARMED WITH ANTI-SHIPPING MISSILES, "WE SEE THEM," HE SAID, "AS QUITE A THREAT ... AS WE LOOK INTO THE FUTURE."

THE NEW SOVIET BOMBER IS ALSO BEING CITED AS A REASON FOR PRESIDENT FORD'S EARLIER REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL DEFENSE MONEY, ALTHOUGH THE MAIN JUSTIFICATION GIVEN WAS LACK OF PROGRESS IN THE STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TALKS. LATE LAST MONTH, THE PRESIDENT ASKED CONGRESS FOR MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS IN ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO KEEP THE PRODUCTION LINE OPEN ON THE MINUTEMAN THREE INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTICS MISSILE -- AND TO START PRODUCTION OF A MORE POWERFUL NUCLEAR WARHEAD FOR THE MISSILE.

IN SUPPORT OF THIS EARLIER REQUEST, AIR FORCE SECRETARY THOMAS REED HAS REFERRED TO WHAT HE CALLED "DISTURBING SOVIET TRENDS." THESE, HE SAYS, "CONTINUE UNABATED. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS OF RESTRAINT IN SOVIET MISSILE DEPLOYMENT, SUBMARINE CONSTRUCTION, OR BACKFIRE BOMBER PRODUCTION." SECRETARY REED ADDED THAT THERE REMAIN SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE USSR THAT HAVE HINDERED WASHINGTON'S EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE AN ACCEPTABLE SALT TWO AGREEMENT.

JS/RCS